

Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Drakopoulou, Sophia ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5733-4381> (2011) User generated content: an exploration and analysis of the temporal qualities and elements of authenticity and immediacy in UGC. In: Conference proceedings. First International Conference on Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Sciences. 22 Nov 2011 - 24 Nov 2011. Hotel Pullman Dubai Mall of the Emirates, United Arab Emirates. Middlesex University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. ISBN 978-9948-16-372-5. [Book Section]

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/9132/>

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

Sophia Drakopoulou

Title:

User Generated Content. An exploration and analysis of the temporal qualities and elements of authenticity and immediacy in UGC.

Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4BT

S.Drakopoulou@mdx.ac.uk +44 7931541048

6000 words

Abstract:

User Generated Content is the term used to describe videos and pictures taken by the public and shown on prominent news corporations, the press and TV news. UGC as evidence and its properties of immediacy and eyewitness quality allow for this genre to become an integral part of experiencing a news event. UGC's significance is formulated by its evidential power and not because of its photojournalistic qualities. UGC is made significant because of its eyewitness qualities, immediacy and assumed authenticity. UGC becomes an established narrative convention in TV news retaining its qualities of sharing a common experience and successfully providing information to a global audience.

Keywords: UGC (User Generated Content), citizen journalism, mobile media, media and communication studies, media analysis.

1. Introduction.

This paper uses the following cases studies, a) the images from 7/7 and b) UGC content from the Attica fires in 2007. User Generated Content (UGC) is the term used to describe videos and pictures taken by ordinary individuals and shown on TV news and in the press. User Generated Content is developing into a new model of news reporting, imitating already given narratives of one-way media. Today in the news, the speed at which information is captured and transmitted surpasses that of any other time. The news report model of the eyewitness is replaced by the intimacy portrayed by the UGC format.

In photography the camera is seen as an accurate tool for depicting the 'now'. This, together with the camera phone's ubiquity, creates the properties and context in which the UGC image or video is read. UGC is read as an accurate snap shot of a moment; a recent moment in time, a recent event. The camera phone and Web 2.0 technology, allows this 'now' to be captured by anyone; uploaded online and presented by dominant news corporations, in the form of an eye witness report. This depiction of the 'now' becomes authentic and immediate as it has been captured by chance; by an eyewitness, a passer-by who unexpectedly encountered the event. The meaning of the UGC image is underpinned by the contrivance that those images were captured by an authentic eyewitness.

2. What Is UGC?

Web 2.0 is a development of www. In brief, the main improvement is in its increase speed and its ease of use. Web 2.0 is new in the way it allows users to review, comment, and publish digital content on self-proclaimed broadcasting platforms. For example, on social networking websites such as facebook and myspace, and on broadcasting platforms such as flickr and youtube, users participate by uploading content, such as videos, images, and text. Users tag their content for others to find and review it. Tagging is a Web 2.0 characteristic making the archiving and searching of content user-led.

Broadband and the recent development of Web 2.0 and P2P platforms allow for the instant upload and download of text, pictures, sound and video. The speed at which they can be uploaded and downloaded surpasses any previous technology. It could be argued that these improvements, along with increased access to new, affordable technology, were necessary before UGC could develop. The ideas of 'citizen

journalism' and 'amateur journalism' are popular within the public domain, and the BBC and CNN use these terms to describe content contributed by their audiences. The principles of journalism: impartiality and objectivity, one can argue; are only myths of a practice that collapses under pressures and politics on both a small and grand scale. The citizen journalism rational follows a logic that presumes an independence from those dynamics. Many argue that the 7/7 images taken by eyewitnesses and featured on the BBC website and TV, established the use of UGC in news reporting. Today, TV and news corporations are investing in the future of UGC. Newspapers in the UK, such as The Guardian and the Evening Standard, host their own readers' blogs, and news media corporations such as the BBC and CNN have their own content players for 'content contributors'.

2.1 The Industry.

In 2006, the CNN i-report website was launched; it prompts its users to: 'take out your camera and i report it for CNN'. CNN regularly broadcasts videos and images by CNN i-reporters in its' TV news reports. For example, the floods in Midwest America and the wild fires of Greece, both in August 2007, were extensively covered by i-reporters. On the CNN i-report website there is no information regarding payment: the i-reporter's name, however, is credited. The BBC has its own content player and hosts on its website the 'your pictures' section.

This paper argues that when UGC appears on TV, the hype of 'citizen journalism' becomes a metamodel for already established narratives in TV news. The 'I was there' the 'this was' of photography, is depicted through UGC when used in TV news and the press, and becomes a metamodel of the eyewitness and connotes the 'you make the news' rhetoric. The speed at which digital content is now uploaded online changes the way in which current events, natural disasters and times of crisis, are reported. The model of immediacy and authenticity portrayed by UGC is used by TV corporations such as CNN, the BBC and news agencies such as Reuters. Supported by prominent corporations such as the BBC and CNN, UGC becomes a narrative model in which citizens appear to be making the news.

2.3 Evidential Power.

Ronald Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, argues for the historical testimony imprinted in photography, he asserts that: 'If the photograph cannot be penetrated, it's because of its evidential power' (1969, p.106). Most famously he says that: 'The photograph

does not necessarily say what is ‘no longer’; but only and for certain ‘what has been’” (1969, p.85). Bernard Stiegler, in his paper *The Discrete Image*, notes the ‘falsification’ of the live televisual image and that of the analogue image (1996, p.151). He borrows Barthes’ fundamental that a photograph depicts ‘something that was’ and reveals the process of ‘the effects of immediate belief’ (Barthes, 1969: 62). The so-called ‘live coverage’ holds within it the element of ‘that was’ deriving from the photograph’s historic properties of its ‘evidential power’. The immediacy of UGC underlines a lack of mediation by editorial policy, the image editor and the reporter’s ‘spin’ on the story. Stiegler asserts that: “What is already there in all editing becomes massively problematic when it occurs live, in the temporal flow of current events. For this flow has the effect both of occulting more profoundly the artifices of imaging and of staging” (1996, p.151). Barthes’ analogue image and Stiegler’s analogical- digital image holds something ‘that was’; a connection to actuality at the time it was taken, the images and videos of UGC which appear on news also have a prominent connection with actual reality. Because the photographic image is likened/linked to the idea that it depicts something ‘that was’, the camera phone image also borrows from this tradition. In this instance, for Stiegler, the televised coverage of an event in real time destabilises the notion of ‘that was’ and creates tensions between reality and fiction (1996, p.151).

2.4 Metamodel Of TV Narratives.

In television news and events broadcasting, the LIVE graphic is usually displayed in one corner of the screen, this is a narrative convention used during the transmission of events and reports. For example, during Sports matches and satellite links with reporters the LIVE logo is used to denote that there is a ‘live’ link to satellite that transmits the image in real-time. The LIVE graphic is a narrative convention used to connote intimacy and immediacy of the reporting, and therefore authenticates the transmission of the event as something happening now as the event is unfolding and whilst the viewer is watching the TV show (Berger, 1991, p.33; Bignell, 1997, p.133-134 149-150). UGC is, therefore, a metamodel of the LIVE broadcast and the eyewitness report. The model of immediacy portrayed in UGC is translated through the imitation of given visual languages employed in TV news. UGC becomes a metamodel imitating established narratives of TV news, this is mainly the LIVE coverage and the eyewitness report. Videos and pictures appearing on Web 2.0 platforms are increasingly used by TV news and the press and given the label of UGC. The eyewitness and the on-the-scene-reporter (reporting LIVE and on location)

are narrative conventions of TV news that UGC is now replacing. The process of recording an event - unexpectedly - and uploading that content online is translated into an authentic and immediate broadcast by prominent TV news providers such as CNN and the BBC. In 2008, the BBC collaborated with the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) and published an academic research paper on the subject of UGC titled UGC@THEBBC. The report asserts that older journalist see UGC as "simply older techniques wrapped up in new technology" (Wardle and Williams 2008, p.58), furthering the point made in this paper that UGC is a metamodel of already established TV narrative conventions such as the eyewitness report and the Live graphic.

2.5 Fixing Of The Present.

Virilio's dark and dystopian view in his book *Open Sky*, sees that perspective and geometry of real space no longer apply in the perspective of LIVE real-time transmission of the televised image (1997, p.32). This paper argues that UGC, firstly, becomes a metamodel of the LIVE transmission of images on television news and, secondly, it gives a false sense of being there. Therefore, it produces similar affects of eliminating distance and portraying a falsified sense of presence as the tele-image discussed by Virilio and Stigler. Just like the LIVE logo before it, UGC creates a simulated presence, as if the viewer has a first hand account of what took place. Virilio uses the term 'telepresence' to imply the falsified sense of being on location through the sight of a televised image (1997, p.152). The LIVE television broadcast and the freezing of that very image promotes the 'spectacle of the visible' which in turn devises a 'fixing of the present' (1997, p.28). Virilio gives much weight to the sense of vision and to the ease with which it can be manipulated and altered. For Virilio, the photographic or video image freeze; the time-freeze, is a kind of 'fixing of the present' (1997, p.28). In the live real-time transmission of the tele-image the spatiotemporal field of the image prevails over the spatiotemporal field of the viewer, creating a kind of void, vacuum, suction; attracting and pulling the viewer into the represented time and space of the image (1997, p.32). Telepresence gives an illusion of being there, of experiencing the event as if being there. In UGC the properties of the mobile phone's ubiquity and the quick dissemination of the networked image lend to the reading of UGC the elements of immediacy and authenticity. The time-freeze described by Virilio is in a sense a snapshot of 'what was' borrowing from Barthes.

3. The 7/7 Images.

On the day of the London bomb attacks, 7 July 2005, the BBC news website dedicated a whole section to photographs taken by people who witnessed the bomb explosions and the immediate aftermath. On that and the following day, the BBC news website crashed several times as it could not cope with the sheer number of users who were viewing those pictures. The three bombs exploded within fifty seconds of each other at 08:50, the bomb exploded in the double-decker bus in Tavistock Square at 09:47. At 16.11 on the day of the bombings, BBC1 broadcast the first video taken from a mobile phone inside one of the bombed carriages. The BBC received 50 images and 300 emails within an hour after the bombing (Twist, 2005; Day et al., 2005, p.9). Within six hours after the bombing, the BBC received more than 1,000 amateur photographs, 20 video, 4,000 text messages and 20,000 emails (Sambrook, 2005). Pictures were uploaded on the BBC website within 45 minutes of them being received (Day et al., 2005, p.9; Glasser, 2005; Twist, 2005). Sky news broadcast the first video at 1pm, it had received it at 12.45 (Glasser, 2005; Day et al., 2005, p.9). This video is known as 'the bombed carriage between Kings cross and Aldgate'. Images of the Tavistock square bus were prominently used in the British and international press. It's worth mentioning that, at first, reports on the London bombings were false as the news were reporting on disturbances caused by a power surge. It was an email sent to the BBC that first challenged the initial reports (Wardle and Williams 2008, p.58).

The most memorable video was broadcast by the BBC and was shown on many other news channels. It depicts the scene of the commuters evacuating the train carriage and walking slowly and silently inside the dark tunnel, towards the station's platform. Other pictures taken by people at the scenes depict the blown up bus, and Londoners walking dazed and confused on the city streets. It is worth noting that the police later asked members of the public to contribute their images as part of the investigation (Gordon, 2007, p.314 conv journal; Twist, 2005). As professional photographers did not have access to the sites, the news and the press considered that the pictures taken by people at the scenes were far more truthful in conveying the terror and carnage of being in such a situation. For the majority of London inhabitants, the tube is the most frequented mode of transport. Viewing the scenes of dust, darkness and terror was a situation that everyone could picture themselves in. The professional photographers who were at the Tavistock square moments after it happened gave the press the

memorable pictures of the woman with the burnt face being helped by a medic, and the London double-decker bus split open.

It can be said that these images convey the traits of photojournalistic sensationalism as the following day (and in an unfortunate predicament) most newspapers featured the image of the blown up landmark London bus, therefore fulfilling the terrorists' aim of creating an iconic image of their attack. In contrast, the pictures shown on the BBC website offered an intimate eyewitness account that surpassed any of those taken by professionals outside the stations (Gordon, 2007, p. 314). Many regard these pictures as the turning point in establishing UGC as credible content for use on TV news and in the Press (Day et al., 2005, p.9). Some of those pictures were first uploaded onto personal blogs before they were used by the news and press (Gordon, 2007, p.314-315; Glaser, 2007). Those pictures have now won international awards, although their makers have never received payment.

The video repeatedly shown on TV news depicts a dreary scene where people are walking along the tunnel minutes after they evacuated the bombed carriage. One picture depicts people evacuating and walking on the tube line. The BBC news website 'your pictures' depicts what seems to be the inside of a London tube carriage filled with smoke. Clearly distinguishable are the identifiable broken parts of the inside of a London tube carriage. These video and images do not need further commentary; they portray the moments after the bombs went off; they reveal a perspective unable to be shown by professional photographers. These images give a firsthand account of 'how it was', with the low resolution and jerky video image adding to the authentic and amateur character.

The intimacy, immediacy and eyewitness account that the 7/7 images offered, were portrayed through blurry, dimly lit and jerky image quality. The 7/7 images (people trying to rescue themselves) offer an intimate eyewitness account of what took place that day. Gordon (2007) in *The Mobile Phone and The Public Sphere* argues that:

“What the pictures lack in photogenic expertise they make up for in immediacy and poignancy. They are a potent documentation of the few critical hours of that morning” (Gordon, 2007, p. 314).

The horrific events of 7/7 prompted people to become amateur journalists, depicting and sharing their experience. What is more, the BBC made a conscious, editorial decision to only use peoples' pictures and video when reporting on the 7/7 bombings.

The images of 7/7 are descriptive of what took place moments after the explosions. They depict the immediate aftermath and carnage inside the bombed carriages. In those videos parts of the tube carriage are easily identifiable, making it easy for the viewer to identify with the location. Ben Rayner, the editor of ITV news channel, was quoted in The Guardian newspaper saying that the BBC, ITV and the British press did not publish all of the pictures they had in their possession (Day et al ., 2005, p.9). Gordon implies that there was some level of editorial policy on the pictures chosen by the news and the press. "They were subject to the usual editorial processes" (2007, p.315) and that the media and press wanted to 'enhance' their coverage of the event by using these pictures (2007, p.314). There were numerous pictures of the front and the side of the bus right after the explosion, but there were no pictures of the back of the bus moments after the explosion. This may indicate that "reason suggests they are more distressful and disturbing than what the media wishes to display" (ibid). The pictures of 7/7 contributed by the public were heavily edited by the media corporations as some were deemed too horrific to show on television and therefore were considered unbroadcastable. The 7/7 images shown on TV and in the press do not show amputated bodies, body parts and other gruesome details that no doubt were part of the bombed scenes. Instead, the 7/7 images are about survival, all of the content depicts how the survivors evacuated the train and how the injured were treated by medics - death is missing from the 7/7 UGC. In 2011, during the Coroner's Inquests into the London Bombing of 7 July 2005, the police released pictures that were previously unseen and kept away from the public as they depicted horrific scenes moments after the explosion (II 2011).

3.1 Relation To Photojournalism.

The aim of a photojournalistic picture is to tell a story and it is usually aided by a caption next to it that situates the images' meaning. Photojournalism can be said to borrow principles from documentary filmmaking and it is seen as a personal interpretation of the photographer that depicts a moment adding his/her own interpretation (Branston and Stafford, 2003, p.26 p.29), as well as being informative in what it depicts. Photojournalism may be thought of as a construct of its maker, but it also has the element of "a kind of trace of the real" (2003, p.26). Furthermore,

although taking a picture may depend of the photographer's luck, professional expertise and talent "in photojournalism a particular moment may somehow come to signify a general truth" (Burgin, 1999, p.45). In TV news UGC videos are presented with the qualities of photojournalism but are not informative of the actual situation. The 7/7 images of evacuating the train inside the tunnel portrayed a scene; an actual scene of what took place immediately after the explosion. It can be said, however, that they do not have photojournalistic qualities of informing of a situation – they merely depicts the ‘reality’ of the situation.

With UGC the TV screen now presents images and videos taken by eyewitnesses in the very recent past, only a few hours after the event took place. UGC becomes a kind of seeing through the eyewitness’s account of what took place. It is as if the viewer is there. For Virilio the televised image is capable of portraying ‘presence at a distance’ (1997, p.16). “Meeting at a distance, in other words, being tele-present, here and elsewhere, at the same time, in this so-called ‘real time’ which is, nothing but a kind of real space-time since the different events do indeed take place, even if that place is in the end the no-place of teletopical techniques” (1997, p.10). UGC is seen as mediating the experience of the person who was there, and as a personal account (unfiltered and unedited) of a person who was present at that place at that moment.

3.2 UGC Qualities.

The definitive qualities of UGC are based on two aspects: firstly, the low image quality adds an authentic character; secondly the time and place it was taken and the presence of the eyewitness authenticates the video’s relevancy. The low-resolution, jerky-image quality in the videos (described above) also denotes the urgency of the situation in which the footage was filmed. As a BBC journalist put it after the 7/7 images made the news:

“the grainy quality of the moving mobile images will improve over time, but news organisation say viewers forgive the quality as they understand the circumstances in which such footage is often shot” (Twist, 2005).

The video’s jerky low-resolution image lends an authentic character to its reading. Furthermore, the speed at which UGC is shown (from capturing it on video and broadcasting it on TV) adds to its quality of immediacy. Noting that the 7/7 video discussed above was uploaded and broadcast on TV within 45 minutes from when it

reached the SKY news channel, therefore less than an hour after the event took place, adds to the reading of UGC as immediate and an authentic portrayal of what took place.

4. Attica Fires.

This part of the paper investigates – the enunciation of UGC content in the Athens fires monitors how it was uploaded and viewed on the first four days, the period between 25- 28 August 2007.

In Greece, the region of Attiki is formed by the Attica basin. The city of Athens is surrounded by mountains, whose forests are essential to the maintenance of the city's microclimate. During the 1970s and 1980s, parts of these forested mountains were burnt down by wild fires, the suspected cause being arson. Years of neglect and lack of reforestation plans allowed for the illegal erection of houses, which led to the legitimate civic planning and building of entirely new suburban areas (Mitoula and Bouraimis 2008, p.11). Suburban areas have developed on what were once forested areas. As a consequence of the reduction of forested areas around Athens, the Attica basin suffers from severe heat waves during the summer months. This, coupled with intensified CO₂ emissions by cars and factories, creates the green house effect that Athens suffers from (2008, p.2). Ymittos, located on the northeast side of Athens, is one of the last remaining green and forested mountains in Athens. It is easily accessible by car, and is popular amongst Athenians for recreational activities. When it caught fire in August 2007 it was feared that one of the few remaining green mountains of Athens would be destroyed. Furthermore, there were fears concerning the repercussions and consequences to Athens' sensitive microclimate. The foot of this mountain hosts three affluent and closely built-up suburban areas. When Ymittos caught fire on the 25th of August 2007, the suburbs that sit at the foot of Ymittos mountain were in immediate danger, and some residences caught fire.

During the Ymittos fire, the Athens skyline resembled a post-apocalyptic scene; a red glowing sky with ash-flake 'snow' filling the atmosphere. At midday the sky of Athens had turned a cloudy red and a thick smoke hung over Athens. The unusual

sight of a red smoke filled sky offered a premonition of the ecological disaster the Athenian microclimate will face in the future, creating a weary feeling amongst Athenians. During the fires, Greece's fire fighting fleet was stretched to its limits, so Russian fire-fighting aeroplanes were brought in especially to help with the fire fighting effort. These Russian planes are far larger in size and greater in power than the Greek fleet's equivalents. The sight of these, along with all the other planes and helicopters flying overhead and in close proximity to buildings, was an added element to the strangeness of the day. Normally, commercial and military flights are prohibited from flying over Athens' airspace as the Acropolis monument is sensitive to atmospheric pressure and aerial vibrations. The unusual sight of a smoke-filled sky emanating a red glow, and the thrilling feeling of hearing, seeing and experiencing the vibration of large aircraft flying overhead, are the two elements that gripped Athenians that day, and are the two main elements communicated by the UGC pictures and videos uploaded on the first four days. From my residence in central Athens I could hear, see and feel aeroplanes flying over my house and in close proximity to the ground. It was midday and my terrace was filled with ash and it looked like it had snowed ash-flakes.

4.1 Attica Fires UGC Chronology.

On the 25th of August, approximately six hours after the start of the fire, two videos appeared on youtube. Over the following days there were 900 views. The videos depict the Russian fire fighting aeroplanes flying over and in close proximity to buildings, releasing large quantities of water. They depict a spectacular image of a large cargo plane flying a short distance above buildings. On 26th August, images were uploaded on a Flickr photo album about fires in Greece. The image depicts the strange phenomenon of the red glowing sky. On the 27th three images of the Attica fires appeared on the 'reader photos' section of the BBC news website. On 28th August a CNN news programme broadcasts an i-reporter image of Athens' landscape. All of these images (Flickr, BBC and the CNN i-reporter's image) depict Athens' red glowing sky at midday.

4.2 Common Experience.

The UGC pictures and videos mentioned above are successful in communicating a common experience; how it was at the time of the event. The Flickr, i-report, BBC images and youtube videos clearly communicate the strange phenomena observed during the fire. It is worth repeating that, on the day of the fire, Athens was covered

by a thick smoky cloud. The sky appeared red, which was visible throughout the Athenian landscape and made an unusual sight. Comparing the coverage of UGC content with my own personal experience I can verify that the UGC images that appeared on the first four days were successful in portraying the situation in Athens. The Common elements depicted in the UGC images and video are: the fire fighting efforts , pictures of Athens landscape filled with smoke, portraying the unusual sight of the smoke filled sky emanating a red glow, providing a thrilling feeling of hearing, seeing and experiencing the vibration of a large aircraft flying overhead. All were topics of discussion in text messaging and phone calls between my friends in Athens. The common elements of the Attica fires' UGC portray the general sentiment of the day that was discussed amongst Athenians, mainly the overwhelming fear for the future consequences of the forests destruction to Athens' microclimate.

The example of the Athens fires illustrates how UGC can be speedily mobilised at a time of crisis when a natural disaster is threatening residences and people. In this case, the UGC portrays an attempt to share a common experience and, to a degree, successfully depicting 'how it was' on the day of the fire. People who wanted to participate and share their experience of the event, uploaded their videos and pictures that depicted what was taking place around them. The images successfully represent the general sentiment of the day and underline the fear and worry for the forthcoming ecological consequences to Athens' microclimate due to the forest's destruction. The Attica Fire videos and images are successful in portraying the general sentiment of that day, as experienced by the author. The unusual phenomenon of a red-skied Athens, enveloped in smoke and with ashes falling from the sky, were the elements communicated in/by the Attica fire UGC. This example demonstrates the speed at which UGC content is captured and published on the Internet. Within a few hours of the start of the fire, videos were uploaded on youtube. It's worth noting that on 29 June 2007, a month before the Attica fires, a similar smaller scale fire broke out on mount Parnitha that is also situated in the Attica basin. This fire sparked a collective public outcry for the forest's destruction and a spontaneous street protest was organised solely by text messages. The protest took place in Athens in July 2007 before the Attica fires in August. This showed the sensitivity of Athenians towards the ecological damage to Athens' microclimate (Tsaliki 2010).

4.3 UGC Needs An Event.

UGC needs an event for it to be validated as relevant, news worthy and authentic. For example, On the 7th of July 2005, the BBC received approximately 1000 photos and 20 videos by 12pm and 35.00 emails. (Clifton head of BBC news interactive quoted in Glaser 2007; Twist 2005). During the disruptive snow in London in February 2009, the BBC received 24.000 images and 132 videos. For the equally disruptive Christmas snow in London in December 2010 the BBC received 35,000 images and 350 videos. The snow pictures from the BBC in February 2009 compared with the Attica fires, both stem from celestial phenomena (snow and a darken sky). They depict a common experience but they do not necessarily inform their audience. They are not informative pictures as they are presented to an audience that already has this as an established common experience. With regards to an international audience as opposed to a local one, the London snow pictures of 2009 and 2010 are not informative of a particularly newsworthy event, whereas the Attica images can inform an international audience as to what Athens felt like during the fires. In UGC people want to share a common experience.

The UGC image has a temporal fix on the present. UGC has a temporal character in the same way as the temporal character of the LIVE logo in televised transmissions defines its quality as real. This recent now portrayed in UGC is its definitive quality. The representational quality of a recent past adds to its meaning. The fact that it is televised a few hours after the event, further implicates its meaning as REAL as something that happened very recently. Therefore it can be said that UGC replaces the news narrative models of the LIVE transmission of a televised event and of the eyewitness account. UGC, as it appears to mediate the experience of being there. In this way, the UGC video on TV news becomes a live testimony of that moment.

The meaning of UGC arrives from the technological properties that mobile media are characterised by: the hand held camera and the videos fast upload and broadcast. The video is read because of its technological properties; that of the camera and the network. The video mediates the experience of being there, as the audience takes part in the event by viewing the obscure video and aligns vision as if experiencing the event firsthand. In TV news the video's newsworthiness is acquired by the speed at which it is broadcast and its proximity to the time the event took place. UGC depicts a recent moment in time: a recent now. In TV news UGC appears to be an authentic portrayal of an event that took place very recently. The property of depicting the now inherited by photography's 'evidential power' of 'that was' together with the mobile

media properties of capture and send, mediate the experience of being there, creating the underling meaning of UGC, mainly that of a 'recent Now'.

The UGC image mediates the experience of the now; how it was (to be there) at the time of the event. When it appears on the TV news (using photography's evidential property) it acts as proof and record of the incident. The video becomes a kind of testimony that 'authentically' portrays the situation of what took place. The camera that records the ambience of the area whilst the event is taking place and the creator's presence and filming of the moment, warrant its relevancy. In TV news, the assumed properties of mobile media, the spontaneous capture of the event by an eyewitness and the immediate dissemination of that content, grant UGC's authentic character. In other words the qualities of low resolution and jerky image warrant the authentic character in UGC, and the time and location, together with its quick dissemination and viewing, grant it relevancy. These elements (the eyewitness's presence and immediate dissemination of content) establish the meaning of these UGC videos as an authentic portrayal effectively communicating the experience of 'how it was' at the time when the event was taking place.

5. Conclusion.

UGC gives an immediate response, a visual reference as to what is happening at that place at that moment, (allowing a few hours delay from capture to public viewing). In the case of the Attica fires videos appeared four hours after the fire started. With the Athens videos, images of the planes flying over buildings showed what people were experiencing. In this example, the small amount of content that went up on the first four days was successful in depicting the situation. People shared a common experience by uploading content on youtube in order to share their distress at the situation. In the case of the 7/7 images the viewer can identify with the image because, firstly, it depicts something familiar to its viewers (the tube) and, secondly, through the process of aligning the field of vision with the spatiotemporal field of the image, the viewer forms a view of what took place. In the Attica fires, the common experience of the fear about the ecological disaster is expressed, and the sensationalist element that depicts planes flying overhead portraying the danger of the situation.

What makes the use of UGC in TV news interesting is its connection to 'a recent now', UGC offers a singular point of view, it is a spatial translation of the experience of the individual who took it, mediated by the viewer's gaze. The idea that the image

depicts a recent moment in time, something that took place a few hours earlier, enhances the reading of the image as an authentic portrayal of what took place. Images of 7/7 were broadcast on UK TV screens only a few hours after the attack; the Attica Fires UGC contents discussed above were viewable on web platforms whilst the event was taking place. Due to the speed at which UGC is shown on TV news and uploaded online, an artificial sense of presence is created, in other words a sense of being there is mediated by the UGC image. Barthes' 'evidential power', together with the quality of the eyewitness testimony, create the sense of authenticity in UGC. The low-resolution jerky image portrays immediacy. UGC replaces the LIVE transmission and becomes a metamodel of given/understood TV narratives. UGC's temporal quality of a recent now attributes immediacy and a sense of presence.

5.1 Epilogue; UGC Today.

In 2011 the uprising of citizens in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and Libya is documented by UGC. The use of UGC in the case of the NATO coalition against the Gaddafi regime is especially interesting. UGC videos are used from both sides as evidence of atrocities. Libyan national television repeatedly shows cremated bodies and bombed family houses from the NATO forces. Equally, countries participating in the NATO coalition, and the UK in particular, show in their TV news images of the 'elusive' Libyan rebels as evidence that such group exists and therefore warrants help and justifies the military action. In Syria, where western journalists are barred, several UGC videos on youtube show protesters being violently put down and killed by the Syria Army. In the recent protests in Athens, the numerous blogs that support this movement host an array of UGC video clips that depict Police violence against peaceful protesters. As with the UGC case studies described above, the UGC coming from the recent citizen uprising in countries of North Africa, its meaning, significance and newsworthy value derive from the same properties discussed in this paper, they depict a recent now, a recent event. And although the image itself does not have photojournalistic qualities, it is presented as authentic because it is taken at that specific time and place and depicts an event that took place very recently.

References

- Anonymous (2011), 'Hearing Transcripts Coroner's Inquests into the London Bombing of 7 July 2005', UK Government. Available at http://7julyinquests.independent.gov.uk/hearing_transcripts/ (accessed 10 July 2011).
- Barthes, R. (1981), *Camera Lucida : Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, 2000.
- Berger, A. A. (1991), *Media Analysis Techniques*: Sage Publications.
- Bignell, J. (1997), *Media Semiotics : An Introduction*, Manchester University Press, Manchester
- Branston, G. and Stafford, R. (2003), *The Media Student's Book*, Routledge, London
- Burgin, V. (1999), 'Art, Common Sense and Photography', in Evans, Jessica and Hall, Stuart (eds.), *Visual Culture : The Reader*; London: Sage in association with the Open University.
- Day, J., Gibson, O., Silver, J., and Huck, P. (2005), 'How the Bombing Tale Was Told', *The Guardian*, 14 July 2005.
- Derrida, J. and Stiegler, B. (2002), *Echographies of Television : Filmed Interviews*, Polity Press, Cambridge
- Glasser, M. (2005), 'Did London Bombings Turn Citizen Journalists into Citizen Paparazzi?', *Online Journalism Review*. Available at <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/stories/050712glaser/> (accessed 10 July 2011).
- Gordon, J. (2007), 'The Mobile Phone and the Public Sphere: Mobile Phone Usage in Three Critical ', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 13 (3) , 307-319.
- Mitoula, R. and Bouraimis, D. 2002 The Sustainability of Athens through Its Atmosphere Upgrading in 38th International Panning Congress: The Pulsar effect Athens 21-26 September 2002. Available at www.isocarp.net/Data/case_studies/161.pdf (accessed 10 July 2011).
- Sambrook, R. (2005), 'Citizen Journalism and the BBC', *Nieman Reports*, 4 (59), 13-14. Available at <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100542> (accessed 10 July 2011).
- Stiegler, B. (2002), 'The Discrete Image', *Echographies of Television : Filmed Interviews*, Polity Press, Cambridge
- Tsaliki, L. (2010), 'Technologies of Political Mobilization and Civil Society in Greece: The Wildfires of Summer 2007 ', *Convergence The International*

Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 16 (2), 151-161.

Twist, J. (2005), 'Mobile Capture Blast Aftermath', *BBC News*, 8 July 2005. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4663561.stm> (accessed 10 July 2011).

Virilio, P. (1997), *Open Sky*, London ; New York: Verso.

Wardle, C. and Williams, A. (2008), *UGC@Thebbc*. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange/cardiffone.pdf> (accessed 10 July 2011).